

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8261
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 4297

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE, SY, PEPR, MILI
SUBJ: REMARKS OF LEFTIST POLITICIAN SAMIR SABBAGH ON
THE CURRENT SITUATION

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF ON JULY 28, SAMIR SABBAGH OF INDEPENDENT NASSERIST MOVEMENT (AL MURABITUN) SAID THE FOLLOWING.
2. MURABITUN FIGHTERS WERE NOT MOBILIZED, AND THE MURABITUN (A MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT) WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN FIGHTING WITH THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AS LONG AS THE SYRIAN ARMY WAS IN LEBANON, UNLESS THERE WERE PROVOCATIONS IN WEST BEIRUT. IF THE SYRIANS SHOULD LEAVE, HOWEVER, THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT WOULD JOIN THE BATTLE. (SABBAGH ALSO VOLUNTEERED THAT HE WOULD WARN THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IF THE MURABITUN WERE PLANNING TO ENTER THE FIGHTING. WE DO NOT KNOW WHETHER WE CAN TAKE THIS PROMISE AT FACE VALUE.)

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3. SABBAGH SAID THAT REUTERS HAD MISQUOTED HIM IN THE INTERVIEW CARRIED IN IKE ON JULY 25 (SEE JULY 25 SITREP). WHEREAS REUTERS HAD CITED SABBAGH AS SAYING THAT "WE FIRMLY BELIEVE THEY (THE SYRIANS) SHOULD STEP ASIDE AND LET US TAKE OVER THE FIGHTING," HE HAD REALLY SAID THAT THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT WOULD FIGHT THE CHRISTIANS ONLY WHEN THE SYRIANS LEFT. SABBAGH ALSO NOTED THAT REUTERS HAD ALSO MISQUOTED HIM AS

SAYING THAT HE HAD CRITICIZED THE SYRIANS FOR USING ARTILLERY RATHER THAN COMMANDO ATTACKS. INSTEAD, SABBAGH HAD REALLY SAID THAT THE SYRIANS SHOULD USE BOTH ARTILLERY AND COMMANDO ATTACKS.

4. DESPITE PRESS ANNOUNCEMENTS OF A RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND DAMASCUS, RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO REMAINED UNCERTAIN, SABBAGH SAID. THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT HAD ASKED DAMASCUS IF THE LATTER WOULD SUPPORT THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT IF THE SYRIAN ARMY SHOULD PULL OUT AND IF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT SHOULD FIGHT THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. DAMASCUS HAD NOT YET REPLIED TO THIS QUERY.

5. SABBAGH AGAIN EXPRESSED GREAT DISSATISFACTION WITH THE "IMBALANCE" OF THE LEBANESE ARMY. HE STRESSED THAT MURABITUN FIGHTERS WOULD FIGHT THE LEBANESE ARMY IF IT NOW TRIED TO ASSUME SECURITY FUNCTIONS IN WEST BEIRUT.

6. SABBAGH SAID THAT THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT REMAINED OPPOSED TO THE DEPLOYMENT SOUTH OF UNITS OF THE LEBANESE ARMED FORCES (LAF). HE WAS UNCLEAR ABOUT WHAT THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT WOULD DO IF LAF UNITS WENT SOUTH, HOWEVER. AT ONE POINT SABBAGH SAID THAT AFTER ALL "NO ARMY CAN BE AS BAD AS THAT OF HADDAD AND SHIDIAC." AT ANOTHER POINT SABBAGH SAID "WE WILL WAIT AND SEE WHAT THE ARMY DOES DOWN THERE."

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7. THE MURABITUN CONTINUED TO SUPPORT PRESIDENT SARKIS, SABBAGH SAID. NOW, HOWEVER, THIS SUPPORT WAS "CONDITIONAL," WHERE BEFORE IT HAD BEEN UNCONDITIONAL. SABBAGH COMPLAINED THAT IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO GET TO SEE THE PRESIDENT BECAUSE BAABDA WAS IN A CHRISTIAN AREA. SABBAGH PROPOSED THAT THE PRESIDENT SPEND HALF HIS TIME IN BAABDA AND HALF HIS TIME IN AN AREA MORE ACCEPTABLE TO THE MUSLIMS. (ABDULLAH SA'DAH, HEAD OF ANOTHER COMPONENT OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, THE PPS, TOLD EMBOFF ON JULY 19 THAT THE PRESIDENT SHOULD MOVE TO BEIT ED DIN IN THE SHUF.)

8. COMMENT. AL MURABITUN HAVE THE MOST FIGHTERS OF ANY OF THE LEBANESE LEFTIST GROUPS. SABBAGH'S REMARKS SUGGEST THAT AL MURABITUN: (A) HAS NO INTENTION OF FIGHTING ALONGSIDE THE SYRIANS AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST; AND (B) DOES NOT INTEND TO ALLOW THE LEBANESE ARMY TO INTRUDE ON MURABITUN TURF IN WEST BEIRUT. END COMMENT. PARKER

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